

REMARKS

The present amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action dated February 4, 2004, which set a three-month period for response, making this amendment due by May 4, 2004.

Claims 11-20 are pending in this application.

In the Office Action, claims 11, 14, and 18-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,389,353 to Kondo. Claims 12-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kondo in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,924,399 to Kaiser et al.

The Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of claims 15-17 and 20, if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.


In the present amendment, claim 11 has been amended to add the features of allowable claim 15 and intervening claim 14. Claims 14-15 have been canceled, and the remaining dependent claims have been amended to change claim dependencies, where necessary.

Therefore, claim 11 should now be allowable over the prior art, along with claims 12-13 and 16-20, each of which depends directly or indirectly from claim 11.

In light of the foregoing amendments, the Applicants respectfully submit that this application stands in condition for allowance. Action to this end is courteously solicited.

Should the Examiner have any further comments or suggestions, the undersigned would very much welcome a telephone call in order to discuss appropriate claim language that will place the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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